

LARAMIE REGION NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER 2016

"Conserving Wildlife - Serving People"

WHAT'S GOING ON?

December 26—Holiday closure

The Laramie Regional office will be closed on Monday, December 26 to recognize the Christmas holiday.

January 3—Post-season online forum

The Laramie Region will host an online forum for hunters to share their thoughts on the 2016 hunting season. Join the discussion at https://youtu.be/kxpjlk2_idc beginning at 6:00 p.m. Hunters can also complete an online survey about the 2016 hunting season at wgfd.wyo.gov/LaramieSurvey.

January 3— Application period

Application period opens online for elk, deer, antelope, moose, mountain goat, bighorn sheep and spring turkey at wgfd.wyo.gov.

January 3— Entries for Conservation Stamp Contest

Game and Fish begins accepting entries for the 2018 Conservation Stamp Art Contest. More info at wgfd.wyo.gov.



Why were pheasants' tails longer this year?

Game and Fish Department personnel have heard many compliments on the length of tails on pheasants raised at Downar Game Bird Farm during this year's pheasant hunting season.

Although it would seem the game bird farm did something different this year, Bird Farm Supervisor Ben Milner says it's just Mother Nature at work.

"All the birds this year had exceptionally long tails," he said. "I wish I could take credit for it, but I can't."

When Milner traveled to Wisconsin for a pheasant management seminar in early 2016, he learned the real reason that pheasants from bird farms sometimes have short tails. "The reason is pretty simple: Mother Nature breaks them off."

Milner said in a typical fall when there is enough moisture to make mud, and temperatures go above freezing during the day and below freezing during the night, the birds simply roost on the ground with their feathers resting on the unfrozen mud. When they stand up in the morning, their tails have frozen into the mud and the feathers break off. Since southeast Wyoming experienced unseasonably warm temperatures throughout most of November, the birds tails were not freezing to the ground and breaking off this year. Photos by Justin Joiner.



Bard Ranch recognized

Amy and Brandin Miller, owners of the Bard Ranch near Wheatland, are being recognized through the Access Recognition Program. This joint program is supported by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission and the Wyoming Board of Agriculture.

The Bard Ranch has extensive properties enrolled in the McFarlane Hunter Management Area, which provides excellent cow elk hunting access; as well as in Platte County Walk-In Hunting Area #18, which is open for multiple species. However, the ranch may best be recognized as a destination for mule deer hunting along the Goshen Rim.

Even after an unfortunate incident in 2015 when a trespasser caused a large fire on some of their property, the Millers recognize the difference between poachers and law-abiding hunters, and continue to promote hunting and wildlife management on their lands.



On the hunt for elk

Hunt Coordinators Levi Wood and Sterling Spilinek were busy in November keeping track of elk movements and coordinating with landowners and hunters in the Laramie Peak area.

The Pinto Creek Hunter Management Area (HMA) proved to be a particularly good spot for elk hunters this year, although snow conditions have now made the western side of the HMA very difficult to access.

While it was open in November, the Bell Otte HMA also provided high success rates for hunters. Elk herds were observed recently on the Mule Creek PAA, McFarlane HMA, Shirley Basin HMA, and Menter Knob HMA.

Several adjacent Walk-In Areas had elk passing through frequently. As snow and snow drifts build in the area, hunters are reminded to carry proper gear for winter weather and ensure they have tire chains and good shovels loaded in their vehicles.

Warm temps challenge hunters

Game and Fish personnel believe difficult hunting conditions during this year's big game seasons were due to unseasonably warm temperatures late into the fall.

Wheatland Game Warden David Ellsworth said mild temperatures kept elk in their summer ranges longer than usual this year, making hunting a challenge for many hunters.

Mule deer season was much the same. There were several larger bucks harvested in Hunt Areas 15, 64 and 65, but the majority were younger age-class bucks. The larger bucks were still hiding up high during the majority of the deer season.

Medicine Bow Game Warden Jordan Winter said elk remained in the foothills and weren't coming out of the high country or off of private lands in Hunt Area 16 as early as in past years. He said some hunters harvested elk, but harvest proved difficult as the elk weren't cooperating overall.



WELCOME TO THE LARAMIE REGION!

Cheyenne Game Warden Mitch Renteria



The Laramie Region welcomes Mitch Renteria as the new Senior Game Warden in Cheyenne. He replaces Shawn Blajszczak, now the new Permitting Specialist.

Renteria is a native of Lincoln, Neb. He graduated from Lincoln Southeast High School and attended college at Southeast Community College and the University of Nebraska. He earned a bachelor's degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Habitat Management with a minor in Grasslands Ecology and Management.

He began his career with the Game and Fish Department in December 2015 when he was hired as a game warden trainee. He graduated from the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy in March 2016 and was assigned to the Laramie Region.

As a senior game warden, his district covers all of Laramie County. His primary goal for the job is to be available to the public. "I'm here to serve the public and to be accessible for the hunters, and to serve and protect the wildlife," he said. He plans to spend a fair amount of time in the Cheyenne office and to be available where members of the public can reach him. "I want people to ask me questions now and not make mistakes later," he said.

He also wants to work to build and maintain relationships with landowners, whether it's assisting them with damage claims or any other wildlife related problems. "Landowners help provide homes for wildlife and I want to be there for them." He also wants to work with landowners to help provide more public access for hunting.

Prior to working for Game and Fish, he spent six summers working at Yellowstone National Park as a Biological Sciences Technician. His duties included controlling invasive weed species, removing hazardous trees and working on human-wildlife interactions. He also volunteered as a backcountry ranger at Yellowstone. Renteria comes from a long line of outdoorsmen, so his calling to become a game warden comes as no surprise. "I've always been interested in the outdoors and I grew up hunting and fishing," he said. Renteria lives with his wife, Tracee, and their new Labrador Retriever puppy, Bridger.

Work begins on Laramie lab and regional office



Construction to be completed in summer 2018



Construction is underway on the new Game and Fish Department lab and regional office at the corner of Adams Street and Venture Drive in Laramie. The building will allow the department to improve its fish health, wildlife forensics and tooth aging programs, as well as providing much-needed space for public meetings. Photos by Jerry Cowles.

WGFD to help with Rock Creek restoration

Laramie Region Aquatic Habitat Biologist Christina Barrineau recently toured portions of Rock Creek with personnel from the Medicine Bow Conservation District.

The district is preparing for restoration projects on Rock Creek near Interstate 80 to address stream instabilities and diversion structures that require annual streambed manipulations.

The diversion structures are also likely seasonal fish passage barriers. The Natural Resources Conservation Service is leading design efforts and several future funding opportunities were discussed.



Town of Rock Creek water diversion and streambed manipulation on Rock Creek near Arlington.
Photo by Christina Barrineau.



Accident claims twelve pronghorn

Laramie Region Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood was called to assist the Wyoming State Patrol at the scene of a wildlife-vehicle collision south of Rock River.

At the scene, officers determined a large herd of approximately 75 pronghorn antelope ran up a steep embankment onto the highway just as a driver came around a blind corner at the same location. Twelve antelope were killed in the crash. The driver was uninjured, but her vehicle wasn't so lucky.

As snow starts building up around the region this time of year, it is important to slow down and watch for wildlife. Big game animals frequently congregate in large herds during the winter and plowed roadways are often the easiest place for them to walk. Accumulated salts along the road may also attract animals to roadways.

According to the Wyoming Department of Transportation, there is a spike in the number of wildlife-related crashes during the fall and winter months. As big game animals migrate out of the mountains to lower elevation winter ranges, the frequency of big game animals increases on Wyoming's highways. Although the frequency of wild animals crossing highways is more notable at dawn and dusk, some wildlife are foraging and crossing the highway at all times of the day and night.

If you observe wildlife on the road, slow down or stop as safely as possible without swerving. If you see one animal crossing the roadway, be aware that there are most likely others. Use your headlights at dusk and dawn, and always be on the lookout for wildlife on or near Wyoming's roadways.



Salmonellosis and bird feeders

Everyone who has a bird feeder in the yard needs to be aware of *Salmonella* and how to prevent mortality in the birds you're feeding. Salmonellosis of passerines (perching birds) is the most commonly spread disease at bird feeding stations. In Wyoming, this disease is seen most often in finches of all species, crossbills, pine siskins, and house sparrows, but all species are susceptible at varying degrees.

In bird feeders, salmonellosis is caused by the bacterium, *Salmonella typhimurium*, but other *Salmonella* species can also be involved. Animals involved in an outbreak may die suddenly or be listless and weak, have ruffled feathers, and may have fecal staining around the vent. Convulsions can even occur in affected birds and prolonged disease (chronic) can lead to emaciation. Not all birds that become infected will show signs of disease; some infected birds do not become sick but shed the bacterium for many weeks, thus acting as "silent" carriers that can continue to infect new feeding stations.

Disease outbreaks may be prevented or controlled by eliminating of point sources of infection. An effective control strategy involves temporary removal of the feeder(s) and water baths as well as thorough cleanup of the immediate vicinity.

To clean potentially contaminated feeders, (1) empty them and discard the feed in a secure container, (2) scrape all organic material from surfaces, (3) scrub all surfaces with soapy water, (4) rinse well, (5) disinfect (a 10 percent bleach solution can be used), (6) rinse well, and (7) allow to air dry.

Feeders should not be put back up until at least several weeks after the outbreak has subsided. Routine husbandry for prevention of feeder-associated outbreaks is essential and includes frequent removal of wet, soiled feed and fecal material from the feeder and its vicinity. Feed should be stored in waterproof, sealed containers.

When cleaning feeders or handling birds, remember to protect yourself. Human disease due to infection with *Salmonella* is well documented. Because passerines can be *Salmonella* "carriers," anyone handling birds or maintaining bird feeders should use routine precautions to prevent transmission.

In the case of feeder-associated disease outbreaks, dead birds should be discarded so as to prevent children or domestic pets from contacting them. Wear latex/nitrile gloves when handling birds or feeders, and always remember to wash your hands after you are through.





Fence removal at Forbes WHMA

Personnel from the Laramie Region, along with Carl Lankford, neighboring landowner to the Forbes Wildlife Habitat Management Area, removed two miles of fence to replace it with wildlife friendly fence. The new fence will allow easier access to water for deer and elk that use the WHMA during winter months. Photo by Micah Morris.

Seeding Pennock WHMA

The Laramie Habitat and Access crew seeded 18 acres of the north meadow of the Pennock Mountain Wildlife Habitat Management Area with a mixture of forbs and grasses. The vegetation will revitalize and enhance the meadow for wildlife use. Photo by Mark Cafaude.



Injured grebe released

This pied-billed grebe landed on an ice-covered road in the town of Medicine Bow, likely believing it was water. It was taken to East Allen Lake and released. Anyone finding injured wildlife should contact the local game warden or a Game and Fish office. Photo by Jordan Winter.

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